

PASTORAL LETTER
OF
THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS
OF THE
ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCES OF QUEBEC, MONTREAL, AND OTTAWA,
ON
The Manitoba School Question.

WE, BY THE GRACE OF GOD, AND FAVOR OF THE
APOSTOLIC SEE, ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS OF THE
ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCES OF QUEBEC, MONTREAL
AND OTTAWA,

*To the Secular and Regular Clergy, and to all the faithful of
our respective dioceses, health and benediction in our Lord.*

Dearly beloved Brethren,

Called by the will of our Divine Lord to the spiritual government of the particular churches confided to their care, the Bishops, successors of the Apostles, have not only the mission to teach truth at all times and to infuse salutary principles into the souls of men, but they have, moreover, in certain critical and perilous circumstances, the right, and it is their duty to raise their voices to forewarn the faithful of dangers that threaten their faith, and to direct, stimulate, and sustain them in the just revindication of their imprescriptible rights, manifestly disregarded and violated.

You know, dearly beloved brethren, the very painful position in which our co-religionists of Manitoba have been

placed by the unjust laws which deprived them, six years ago, of the separate school system, which, in virtue of the Constitution of the country, they enjoyed till then — a school system so important, so necessary for a mixed population, for a healthy education and for the formation of children in the principles of the Catholic faith, which is, on earth, our greatest treasure and most precious inheritance.

We stood not in need of the decisions of civil tribunals, dearly beloved brethren, to see the injustice of these Manitoban laws, these attacks on liberty and justice, still, it has pleased Divine Providence, in His wisdom and goodness, to obtain for Catholics the legal support of an unexceptional and sovereign authority in the recognition, by the highest tribunal of the Empire, the legitimacy of their griefs and the legality of a Federal Remedial measure.

In view of these facts, the Canadian Episcopate, solicitous above all, for the interest of religion and the good of souls, could not dissimulate the gravity of the duty which was imposed on their pastoral solicitude, and which obliged them to claim justice as they have done.

For, since the Bishops, whose authority is from God himself, are the natural judges of questions concerning christian faith, religion and morals; since they are the recognized heads of a perfect society, sovereign and superior by its nature and its end to civil society, it belongs to them, when circumstances require it, not only to express unequivocally their views and their desires in every religious matter, but to point out to the faithful, or approve of suitable means to arrive at the spiritual end they have in view. This is the doctrine of the great Pope Leo XIII, in his

Encyclical *Immortale Dei* : “ All that is sacred in human affairs, under any title whatever, all that regards the end in view, all such falls under the jurisdiction and authority of the Church.”

We deem it of importance, dearly beloved brethren, to remind you briefly of these inherent principles in the constitution of the church itself, these essential rights of religious authority, in order to justify the attitude taken by the members of the Catholic Hierarchy in the present school question, and to explain more fully the obligations under which the faithful are of following Episcopal directions.

If there are, in fact, circumstances in which Catholics ought to manifest openly towards the church all the respect and devotedness to which she is entitled, it is surely in a crisis such as the present, when the highest interests of faith and justice are at stake, demanding on the part of all good men, a united and firm front under the direction of their leaders.

We had hopes, dearly beloved brethren, that the last session of the Federal Parliament would bring to a termination the school difficulties which so widely divide men's minds ; we have been deceived in these hopes. History itself will judge of the causes which impeded the long-expected solution.

As for us who have in view only the triumph of the eternal principles of religion and justice confided to our care, we, whom no defeat will ever be able to dishearten or turn aside from the accomplishment of the divine mission which was that of the apostles themselves, we feel, in the presence of the electoral struggle about to take place, that

an imperative duty is incumbent on us : this duty is to indicate to all the faithful under our jurisdiction, and whose consciences we have to direct, the only line of conduct to be followed in the present elections.

Should we, first of all, remind you, dearly beloved brethren, how noble and important is the right bestowed upon you by the constitution in designating for office the depositaries of public power ? Every citizen worthy of the name, every Canadian who loves his country, who wishes it to be great, peaceful and prosperous, should interest himself in its government.

Now, the government of our country, of a people still young, but capable of occupying a distinguished place among the nations, will be what you will make it yourselves by your choice and by your votes.

That is to say, dearly beloved brethren, as a general rule, and save rare exceptions, it is a duty of conscience for every citizen to vote : a duty all the more grave and pressing as the questions disputed are important and may exercise over your destinies an influence more or less decisive.

That is to say, again, you should vote as honest, wise, enlightened and intelligent christians.

Avoid then, dearly beloved brethren, the deplorable excesses against which we frequently warned you ; perjury, intemperance, lying, calumny, violence and party spirit, which warp the judgment and produce a kind of voluntary obstinate blindness.

Do not sell your vote. To vote is a duty, and duty is not sold. Give not your vote to the first comer, but to him

whom in conscience you judge the best qualified by his mental powers, firmness of character, and his moral principles, to fill the noble office of legislator.

And that this judgment may be surer, and more enlightened, fear not the criticisms of a newspaper or the opinions of a friend who would hamper your mind : consult, when necessary, before voting, persons who, by their instruction, their rank or their social standing, are best qualified to judge of the questions that are agitated, and to appreciate the relative value of the candidates who ask your suffrage.

These are, dearly beloved brethren, general principles of wisdom and christian prudence, that apply to all times and to all elections in which the laws of the country permit you to take part.

But, in the present circumstances, the duty of Canadian electors, principally Catholic electors, is invested with a character of special importance, to whose gravity we desire to call your attention in a special manner. A grave injustice was committed against the Catholic Minority in Manitoba.

They were deprived of their Catholic Separate Schools, and forced to send their children to schools that their consciences condemn. The Privy Council of England recognized the justice of the Catholic claim, and the right of the Federal Authorities to interfere, in order that justice be done to the oppressed. It is question then for the Catholics of our country, and well meaning Protestants to unite their strength and their suffrages, to secure a final victory for religious liberty, and the triumph of the rights secured by the Constitution. The means to secure this end is to elect,

as representatives of the people, only men sincerely resolved to favor with all their influence and to sustain in Parliament a measure to remedy the evils from which the Manitoban minority suffers. In speaking to you thus, dearly beloved brethren, our intention is not to bind ourselves to any of the parties that are combating in the political arena ; on the contrary we desire to preserve our liberty. The Manitoba School Question being, before all, a religious question, intimately allied to the dearest interests of the Catholic faith in this country, to the natural rights of parents, and also to the respect due to the Constitution of the country and to the British Crown, we would regard it as betraying a Sacred Cause of which we are, and ought to be, the defenders if we did not use our authority to secure its success.

Remark, dearly beloved brethren, that a Catholic is not permitted, in whatever position he may be,—a journalist, an elector, a candidate or a representative, to have two lines of conduct in religious questions, one for private, and the other for public life, to trample underfoot, in the exercise of his social duties, the obligations imposed on him as a submissive child of the Church. This is why our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII, in his Encyclical *Libertas præstantissimum* condemns those who “pretend that, in all that concerns the government of human society, its institutions, morals, laws, public functions, the instruction of youth, no more attention is to be paid to the Church than if She did not exist. For the same reason he says elsewhere (Encyclical *Immortale Dei*) : “ Before all it is necessary that all Catholics, worthy of the name, determine to be, and show

themselves devoted sons of the Church : that they repulse without hesitation all that would be incompatible with this profession ; that they make use of public institutions as far as they can in conscience for the furtherance of truth and justice.

Therefore, dearly beloved brethren, all Catholics should support only those candidates who bind themselves formally and solemnly to vote in parliament in favor of legislation which will restore to the Catholic minority of Manitoba the school rights to which they are entitled by the decision of the Hon. Privy Council of England. This grave duty is incumbent on every good Catholic, and you would not be justified either before your spiritual guides, nor before God himself by neglecting this obligation.

Until now we could congratulate ourselves on having the sympathetic support of a great number of our separated brethren who understood that , in a country such as ours, having different religions, it is necessary for the general good to make use of this broadness of view which respects liberty of conscience and acquired right. We appeal again to their spirit of justice and patriotism, so that, joining their influence to that of Catholics they may aid them to redress the grievances of which our co-religionists so justly complain.

What we want is the triumph of right and justice, the re-establishment of the rights and privileges of our Manitoba Brethren, the Roman Catholic minority, in educational matters so as to shelter them from arbitrary and unjust legislation.

We rely in this matter, dearly beloved brethren, on your spirit of faith and obedience.

We are convinced that, submissive in mind and heart to the teaching of your chief pastors, you will know how, if called upon, to place above your personal opinions and feelings the interests of a cause which excels all others ; that of justice, order, and harmony in the different classes which compose the great Canadian family.

Done, and signed at Montreal, on the sixth day of May, one thousand eight hundred and ninety-six.

- † EDWARD-CHAS., Abp. of Montreal.
- † J.-THOMAS, Abp. of Ottawa.
- † L.-N., Abp. of Cyrène, adm. of Quebec.
- † L.-F., Bishop of Tree-Rivers.
- † L.-N., Bishop of St. Hyacinthe
- † N.-ZÉPHIRIN, Bishop of Cythère, vic. Apost. of Pontiac.
- † ELPHÈGE, Bishop of Nicolet.
- † ANDRÉ-ALBERT, Bishop of St. Germain of Rimouski.
- † MICHAEL-THOMAS, Bishop of Chicoutimi.
- † JOSEPH-MÉDARD, Bishop of Valleyfield.
- † PAUL, Bishop of Sherbrooke.
- † MAX., Bishop of Druzipara, coadjutor to the Bishop of St. Hyacinthe.

By order of their Lordships,

ALFRED ARCHAMBEAULT, Canon,
Chancellor.